DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 460 404 CS 510 077

TITLE	Method Improvising: Example Performance Package, Minnesota Profile of Learning.
INSTITUTION	Minnesota State Dept. of Children, Families, and Learning, St. Paul.
PUB DATE	1996-10-00
NOTE	9p.; For other profiles of learning, see CS 510 078 and CS 510 086.
AVAILABLE FROM	Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1500 Highway 36 West, Roseville, MN 55113-4266. Tel: 651-582-8002.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Standards; Class Activities; *Creative Dramatics; Drama; *Folk Culture; *Improvisation; Performance Based Assessment; Primary Education; *State Standards; Student Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS	Folktales; *Method Acting; *Minnesota Graduation Standards

ABSTRACT

Developed by classroom teachers during the development phase of Minnesota's Graduation Standards, this performance package is made up of locally designed assignments that, taken together, show whether a student has learned and can apply the knowledge and skills related to "method" acting and improvising. It begins with reference to the particular content standard addressed in the package, the educational level of the package (honors/primary), and a summary statement of the content standard. It then describes the task associated with the student performances: dramatize a folktale with background, props, and masks. It then offers specific statements from the standard regarding what students should know and should do, the products, task description, special notes, and feedback checklists for each task enumerated in the package. (RS)

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Published:

1996-10

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CS 510 077

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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING
Performance Package
Minnesota Profile of Learning

Content Standard: Arts P.1 _____ Honors Primary Level

Course: Reading/Literature/Drama __√__ Partial

Title of Package/Activity: Method Improvising _____ Required

Summary Statement of Content Standard:

Create and describe a variety of artistic works.

Description of Student Performances:

		Performance Record	Achievement*
Task 1:	Dramatize a folktale with background, props and masks.	Date:	Grade:

FINAL ACHIEVEMENT GRADE/RATING: 4 3 2 1

Task Management Skills:

Performance Record

Time Management
- Complete work according to a plan
- Monitor and adjust work plan when necessary
- Use time, space and movement efficiently
- Meet deadlines

***Scoring Criteria**
4 - Performance on the part(s) of the standard addressed in this package achieves and exceeds expectations of high standard work.
3- Performance on the part(s) of the standard addressed in this package meets the expectations of high standard work.
2 - Work on the part(s) of the standard addressed in this package has been completed, but all or part of the student's performance is below high standard level.
1 - Work on the part(s) of the standard addressed in this package has been completed, but performance is substantially below high standard level.
No package score is recorded until ALL parts of the package have been completed.

PERFORMANCE PACKAGE TASK 1
Method Improvising

Standard Code: Arts P.1 _____ Honors Primary Level

Topic: Acting __√__ Partial

Amount of Time: 2-3 weeks _____ Required

Specific Statement(s) from the Standard:

THEATER

What students should do:

1. Use movement, sound and language to create images, express emotions and imitate animals, objects, or shapes
2. Use elements of environment, costume and props to communicate story and character

Product:

1. Dramatization of Folktale
2. Staging accessories:
   - props
   - background
   - face masks
3. Record of goals
4. Reflection paragraph

Central Learning:

- Make numerous decisions about details that combine to create a representation of an idea.

Task Description:

Overview: Students use an animal folktale to dramatize a scene or entire story, creating background, props, and a face mask for their performance. They are introduced to method acting exercises involving feeling and body states, and also the concepts of real and mask character goals.

1. Begin by choosing animal folktales appropriate for this task, which would include stories with well developed characterization, sensory images, and dramatic elements. (Many cultural folktales sufficiently provide these elements.) If students work in small groups, you will need to have a variety of appropriate folktales available. You may either assign the groups one scene from a vaiety of folktales or allow students to choose their groups and folktale scene. You may also wish to complete this task as a class play, in which case a Bantu folktale titled The Name of the Tree is recommended. (See Special Notes, #1.)

Task Description, continued

2. Guide the class as a whole through various dramatic exercises. Explain that they will learn to act animal characters by practicing sounds, acting out feeling states, and dramatizing how their bodies react under different circumstances.

   - **Sounds.** Explain that students will focus on sounds of animals in the first exercise. Take them through a range of animals, such as lion, eagle, kitten, mouse, turtle. Remind them to concentrate on sound alone, rather than body movement.

     Example. If students say that they do not know what a turtle sounds like, ask them to imagine a sound from how a turtle looks and moves.

   - **Body states, or how the body responds in various situations.** Ask students to imagine various physical environments and act out how their bodies would respond.

     Example. Ask students to close their eyes and imagine a very hot August day out in a sunny parking lot, then show how their bodies might react to the heat. Remind them to take the time to imagine it first, to try to actually feel hot. Other examples might include fatigue, falling into a cold river, getting a broken arm, having the flu, etc.

   - **Feeling states.** Guide students through various imaginative situations to evoke different emotions. Explain that good actors learn to actually feel what their character would be feeling, because feelings show through into their bodies for the audience to see.

     Example. Ask students if they can tell sometimes when someone is sad, even if that person doesn't tell them. Explain that they can tell the person is sad because they are reading "body language." Ask them to imagine that their best friend has just moved away. Point out to students the various ways in which they are successfully communicating sadness through their bodies; hunched shoulders, bent head, downward gaze, etc. Other feelings to evoke might be fear, happiness, boredom, excitement, etc.

3. Explain that students will now learn how to act better through understanding characters' motivations or goals and their personal styles.

   - **Mask Goals and Real Goals.** Explain that sometimes people have goals that other people can't see because they cover up their real goal with a mask goal. To be a good actor, students have to decide what their character's real goal is and if they have a mask goal that covers up the real goal.

Task Description, continued

Example. In The Name of the Tree, we learn that the real goal of the gazelle is to get praise from the other animals, and that it is more of a mask goal to help the other animals out by getting the name of the tree. The person playing this part would have to remember to act out both the gazelle's real goal to be praised and his mask goal to help.

- **Personal Styles.** Explain that while people all have thoughts, emotions and instincts, everyone tends to use one of these areas more than the others. These areas all relate to different body parts in acting, and can help students add appropriate gestures and body language. If their character depends primarily on thinking, they might have a lot of head gestures, and even have the head lead the rest of the body when they walk. If a character mainly uses their emotions, which relate to the heart, they might walk with their chest stuck out and make a lot of hand gestures around the chest. If their character mainly uses their instincts, the stomach area and legs would get more emphasis. (You can demonstrate these actions for the students.) Explain that it's important to decide which area their character depends on and uses the most because that will help them add convincing body movements. (For an excellent resource in teaching these concepts to elementary students, see Bring in the Arts by Pam Prince Walker, pp. 42-45.)

  Example. In The Name of the Tree, the gazelle wants to run fast, which involves instinct and the legs more. The elephant believes she has the best memory, so she tends to use her thinking or head more. The young tortoise only wants to help, which means he uses his emotions or heart more.

4. Encourage students to use their imaginations in creating their characters from the scripts. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers for some of the interpretations they will be making, that they are helping to develop the character through their choices. Ask students to prepare for their part by going through a duplicated copy of their scene and writing down the different feelings they think their character may be experiencing at different places in the scene. They should write down the feelings in the margins.

   Next, ask students to review their character's part in the script again and mark down any places where their character has real or mask goals. (You may want them to use a different color pen for this task.) Remind students that all the characters will have real goals, although only some will have mask goals.

   Examples. If they are playing the part of the lion in The Name of the Tree, a student might write down "bored" or "curious" at the place in the script where the gazelle comes to the lion, "bothered" or "irritated" or "frustrated" where the elephant comes to him, and "angry" when the turtle shows up.

Task Description, continued

Characters that have both kinds of goals might have mask goals in some places and real goals in other places, and sometimes even both kinds of goals at once. The gazelle in The Name of the Tree, for instance, started out with the real goal of wanting to help the other animals, which changed more into a mask goal as his pride took over.

5. Give students time to begin practicing their scenes. Tell them to begin with language and sounds for their character, and to add movement when they are satisfied with the way their character sounds. Remind them to keep feeling states and body states, goals and personal styles in mind as they practice acting.

6. If they are working in small groups, ask students to sign up for a rehearsal with you when they feel prepared. Explain that students should be prepared to explain their scene and the roles of all the characters, including real and mask goals, feeling states and body states. Give the students feedback on their performance and responses.

7. Students should rehearse at least three more times. Ask each student to record a group and an individual goal after each rehearsal that will help them improve the play. Ask them to especially note how they could use their knowledge of body and feeling states, and real or mask goals, to develop their sound or movement further.

8. Guide students in preparing a background, any necessary props, and face masks for their scenes. Ask them to try to express the feeling and body states of their character in the face mask, and to make sure the background and props help to tell the story.

   Face masks can be created from a number of materials, including fabric, paper bags or construction paper, or the plaster gauze used for making casts, which can be purchased in large rolls at art stores or hospital supply stores. (The gauze is cut into strips, wetted and placed on the face to dry. Afterward, these masks can be painted and/or decorated.)

9. Ask students to write a short paragraph explaining how their awareness of body and feeling states, their character's real and/or mask goals, and their character's personality style affected their choices in creating face masks. The following are possible guidelines for developing their paragraphs:
   - Describe at least one feeling state of your character. How did this feeling state show in the mask? (In color, choice of material, size of eyes or mouth, etc.)
   - Describe at least one body state of your character. How did this body state show in the mask?

10. Groups may then perform their scenes for the class, or you may videotape a class performance.

PERFORMANCE PACKAGE TASK 1
Method Improvising

Task Management Skills:

Time Management
- Complete work according to a plan
- Monitor and adjust work plan when necessary
- Use time, space and movement efficiently
- Meet deadlines

Special Notes:

1. Lottridge, Celia Baker. The Name of the Tree. New York: McElderry Books, 1989.

The following article also contains an excellent bibliography of African folktales: Wiseman, C. *African Tales on Stage*. Booklinks, 1992, No. 1, Vol. 3, 24-26.)

The following resource contains instructional strategies in the area of improvisation:

Walker, P. P. *Bring in the Arts: Lessons in Dramatics, Art, and Story Writing for Elementary and Middle School Classrooms.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993.

Teachers will also find the following resources helpful:

Cecil, N.L. and Lauritzen, P. *Literacy and the Arts for the Integrated Classroom: Alternative Ways of Knowing.* White Plains, NY: Longman, 1994.

Laughlin, M.K. and Street, T.P. *Literature-Based Art & Music: Children's Books & Activities to Enrich the K-5 Curriculum.* Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1992.

This performance package is based on material that may appear in the following publication: Monson, M.P. and Monson, R.J. (in press). *Integrated Learning Assessment: Building Stronger Bridges Between Learning, Curriculum and Assessment.* Tucson, AZ: Zephyr Press. Task designer Michele Pahl Monson can be reached through e-mail at 0197supt@informns.k12.mn.us.

Performance Criteria:

FEEDBACK CHECKLIST FOR TASK 1
Method Improvising

E=Excellent
S=Satisfactory
N=Needs Improvement

Student		Teacher
	Duplicated Scripts	
_____	Feeling states are marked in the right places in the script.	_____
_____	The identified feeling fits appropriately with action in the script.	_____
_____	A real character goal is clearly identified, and any mask goals are believable.	_____

Performance Criteria, continued

Student		Teacher
	Goal Records	
_____	Feeling and body states are linked to sound and movement.	_____
	Written Paragraph	
_____	Feeling and body states are connected to details of the mask.	_____
	Scene/Play	
_____	Sound and movement are linked to body states.	_____
_____	Sound and movement are linked to feeling states.	_____
_____	Sound and movement are linked to the character's real goals (and mask goals).	_____
_____	Sound and movement are linked to the character's style.	_____
_____	Background, props and face masks help to communicate the story.	_____
	OVERALL EVALUATION	_____

Notes following Performance:

ATTACH ALL DOCUMENTS THAT ARE APPROPRIATE TO THIS PERFORMANCE TASK